

The
PSO Pileated



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From the President's Desk....

All I can say is, "What a meeting!" I am still thinking about everything that happened at Sieg Conference Center and in the surrounding habitats. Thanks to the board and members in general for making the 2012 annual meeting a definite success!

I am constantly repeating in face to face conversations, on the PABirds list serve, and on Facebook that nothing replaces finally meeting those whose names I see every day on the internet and in birding articles and publications. These birders are people like everyone else, and it is good to realize that we all have something in common.

Although Laurie Goodrich probably wouldn't remember this, I remember meeting her at Hawk Mountain too many years ago to mention. She smiled and helped birders then, and she has not changed except by becoming more knowledgeable in her field. She has deserved the Poole Award for a long time now, and I am glad I was present to actually hand the award to her. Congratulations, Laurie!

Bobby Bower was the recipient of the PSO Youth Scholarship. What a refreshing breath of enthusiasm and natural curiosity. Many members have commented on how well-behaved, energetic, and delightful this young man was at the meeting. Also, what a nice family he has! I concur on both statements and hope to see more of Bobby, his family and his peers in the future of PSO. In addition, Daniel Winstead, last year's youth scholarship recipient, attended PSO again this year with his father. It's

great to see our youth scholarship winners returning.

The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy was the recipient of our 2012 Conservation Award. During the presentations, I was humbled by the work that they have done for the environment in our state. That environment is the habitat of bird species that we now, but probably shouldn't, take for granted. Please, keep up the good work so we can remain healthy, keep birding, and actually see birds.



One of the field trip destinations was the Mill Hall Wetlands.

Photo by Mike Fialkovich

The birding at the meeting was good, the weather was very cooperative, and the participants were the best part of the weekend. About 90 members and guests attended the meeting. Sieg Conference Center is located on a very nice trout stream in the middle of the forest. For me, the cost of the accommodations was excellent - \$0. Even though we stayed up late owling, discussing birds, and even telling stories, I slept better than I would have if I had spent \$300 in a hotel for the weekend!

The final bird list is on page 3 of this publication. Any event that yields 147 species is not to be taken lightly. Migrants seen or heard on our outings included Bay-breasted Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and Blackpoll Warbler. Future PSO Annual Meetings may not yield migrants as the Board has agreed to move the date around a bit. The third weekend of May competes with many ornithological events that birders don't want to miss to spend indoors when they could be out birding. I can't blame them.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 31 through June 2 in the Wyoming Valley/Wilkes-Barre and surrounding areas. Please mark the dates on your calendars now, so that you can attend! This will be the first meeting that I will be presiding over as president of the organization; I would rather be nervous in a crowded room than in an empty one!

It is with more than a little trepidation that I begin the task of trying to lead the organization during the next two years. I am not sure I can keep the pace set by the presidents who preceded me, but I will try my best to do so. The organization deserves no less. In my mind's eye, I see PSO as the unifying organization for birdwatching/birding/ornithological research and education in the state. By stating that, I am not putting any other society, club, or organization down. Every group has a part to play, and they all do their best. I see PSO, which began just as the 1st Breeding Bird Atlas came to a close, as the central organization for this. Now that the publication of the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas is imminent, this may be the perfect time to examine how we are doing and tweak it to accomplish our mission.

In the past few months, I think you may have begun to hear more from me and PSO in general. For instance, we

began a Facebook page. Not everyone is into Facebook, but if you are not on FB, you are missing many younger birders who are! These birders are looking for things to do both in Pennsylvania and out of state, and they are the future of birding. I can see them doing wondrous things in ornithology and in PSO. I am not very tech, so I am waiting for the day that the Social Media Committee, which is in the works, takes this task from me.

At the meeting we provided sign-up sheets for members to join committees in PSO. Believe it or not, members did sign up for committees. Maybe you have the skills and time needed for one or more of these committees. More information about the committees will be coming in the near future.

I know that the members will step up to help the organization. How do I know this? Remember that any organization is only as good as the members who belong to it. PSO has great members, and I look forward to working for all of you!

As always, good birding!

– John Fedak, President

PSO 2012 Meeting Attendees

Todd Bauman	Dianne Franco	Rudy Keller	Joan Renninger
Diane Bierly	Nate Fronk	Nick Kerlin	Kathy Riley
Rob Blye	Vern Gauthier	Ramsay Koury	Chris Roche
Nick Bolgiano	Laurie Goodrich	Janet Kuehl	Bob Ross
Bob Bower	Chris Grecco	Tom Kuehl	Jeremy Scheivert
Bobby Bower	Deb Grim	Sherri LaBar	Charlie Schwarz
Jodi Bower	Doug Gross	Mike Lanzone	Allen Schweinsberg
Timber Bower	Deb Grove	Doreen Laubscher	Joanne Schweinsberg
Susan Braun	Greg Grove	Wayne Laubscher	Deb Siefken
Dan Brauning	Carol Guba	Mary Linkevich	Ralph Siefken
Jim Brett	Bonnie Hannis	Melissa Little	Bob Snyder
Dottie Brett	Mark Henry	Gary Lockerman	Thyra Sperry
Margaret Brittingham	Margaret Higbee	Sandy Lockerman	Kim Van Fleet
Derek Clawson	Roger Higbee	Pat Lynch	Marjorie Van Tassel
Emily Hughes Clawson	Jamie Hill	Sherron Lynch	Linda Wagner
Susan Comfort	Marjorie Howard	Betsy Manlove	Larry Waltz
Bob Cook	Shonah Hunter	Richard Martin	Drew Weber
Ruth Cook	Larry Jackson	Annette Mathes	Daniel Winstead
Jane Earle	Laura Jackson	Mark McConaughy	Ray Winstead
Gary Edwards	Mike Jackson	Flo McGuire	David Yeany
Deborah Escalet	Mark Johnson	Jim McGuire	Nate Zalik
John Fedak	Chad Kauffman	Dave Reiger	Elizabeth Zbegner
Mike Fialkovich			

Birds Listed at 2012 PSO Meeting at Lock Haven

Canada Goose	Mourning Dove	Barn Swallow	Magnolia Warbler
Wood Duck	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Black-capped Chickadee	Bay-breasted Warbler
American Black Duck	Black-billed Cuckoo	Tufted Titmouse	Blackburnian Warbler
Mallard	Barn Owl	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Yellow Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Eastern Screech-Owl	White-breasted Nuthatch	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Common Merganser	Great Horned Owl	Brown Creeper	Blackpoll Warbler
Red-breasted Merganser	Chimney Swift	Carolina Wren	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Ring-necked Pheasant	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	House Wren	Pine Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Belted Kingfisher	Winter Wren	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Wild Turkey	Red-headed Woodpecker	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Prairie Warbler
Common Loon	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Black-throated Green
Pied-billed Grebe	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Eastern Bluebird	Canada Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	Downy Woodpecker	Veery	Wilson's Warbler
Least Bittern	Hairy Woodpecker	Hermit Thrush	Yellow-breasted Chat
Great Blue Heron	Northern Flicker	Wood Thrush	Eastern Towhee
Green Heron	Pileated Woodpecker	American Robin	Chipping Sparrow
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Gray Catbird	Field Sparrow
Black Vulture	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Northern Mockingbird	Savannah Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Acadian Flycatcher	Brown Thrasher	Song Sparrow
Osprey	Alder Flycatcher	European Starling	Swamp Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Willow Flycatcher	Cedar Waxwing	Dark-eyed Junco
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Ovenbird	Scarlet Tanager
Red-shouldered Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	Worm-eating Warbler	Northern Cardinal
Broad-winged Hawk	Great Crested Flycatcher	Louisiana Waterthrush	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Red-tailed Hawk	Eastern Kingbird	Northern Waterthrush	Indigo Bunting
American Kestrel	Yellow-throated Vireo	Golden-winged Warbler	Bobolink
Merlin	Blue-headed Vireo	Blue-winged Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Peregrine Falcon	Warbling Vireo	Black-and-white Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
Virginia Rail	Red-eyed Vireo	Tennessee Warbler	Common Grackle
Sora	Blue Jay	Mourning Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Gallinule	American Crow	Kentucky Warbler	Orchard Oriole
Killdeer	Fish Crow	Common Yellowthroat	Baltimore Oriole
Spotted Sandpiper	Common Raven	Hooded Warbler	Purple Finch
Solitary Sandpiper	Purple Martin	American Redstart	House Finch
American Woodcock	Tree Swallow	Cape May Warbler	American Goldfinch
Ring-billed Gull	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Cerulean Warbler	House Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Cliff Swallow	Northern Parula	

Total = 147 species



The Lick Run Natural Area yielded a nice assortment of birds.
Photo by Mike Fialkovich



The Farrandsville area was another field trip's destination.
Photo by Mike Fialkovich

PSO Annual Meeting – A Bird's Eye View

by Mark McConaughy

The 2012 annual PSO meeting was held between Friday, May 18, and Sunday, May 20, at the Lock Haven University (LHU) Sieg Conference Center in Clinton County. I traveled to the meeting on Friday, May 18, and stopped at Bald Eagle State Park along the way. I met

Bob Snyder while I was at Bald Eagle State Park. He was checking the area for the PSO tours he would be leading to the park on Saturday and Sunday. Bob showed me where the Bald Eagle nest was located, and we were able to view both adults and two juveniles that appeared almost ready to fledge. Yellow Warblers and Common Yellowthroats were singing all over the main park area. Bob indicated that he had seen Golden-winged Warblers at the Upper Green Run area of the park. I went to the Upper Green Run area in the afternoon, but by then, most of the birds had stopped calling. I did not see or hear the Golden-winged Warblers.

I drove from Bald Eagle State Park to my motel at the Lamar/Lock Haven exit off I-80. I checked in then drove to the LHU Sieg Conference Center for the PSO business meeting that was to be held on Friday evening. The LHU Sieg Conference Center is located along Fishing Creek gorge between two mountain ridges among a hemlock and mixed deciduous forest. It is a wonderful setting for studying birds. Aden Troyer had already set up his display of binoculars and spotting scopes in a pavilion next to the conference center by the time I arrived. If anyone is interested in buying a good set of binoculars or spotting scopes, you can examine, compare, and if so inclined, purchase one (or more!) of a wide range of optics from a variety of reputable manufacturers that Aden Troyer sells at the PSO meetings. While waiting for the meeting to begin, we watched a small flock of Cedar

Waxwings flying around the hemlocks. Also, we saw an adult Broad-winged Hawk circling overhead and watched two Great Blue Herons fly up Fishing Creek. A Blackburnian Warbler perched in a distant tree provided a wonderful test case for comparing the capabilities of

Troyer's spotting scopes and binoculars.

The PSO business meeting began at 7:30 p.m. The primary task was to elect PSO board members who either were coming up for reelection or were nominated as new board members. All were unanimously elected (see the names of the elected board members elsewhere in the newsletter). Wayne Laubscher described the Saturday and Sunday morning field trips after the election. The field trips included visits to Cherry Run at State

Game Lands 295, the Mill Hall Wetlands and Salona Area, local nesting Kestrel and Peregrine Falcons, Farrandsville and the Lick Run Natural Area, Bald Eagle State Park and nearby areas, and the Hyner-Glen Union area in Clinton and Centre Counties. Attendees were able to sign up for the field trips they wished to take on Saturday and Sunday. The business meeting adjourned around 8:15 p.m. Mike Lanzone then set up his listening devices for recording migrating night birds so we could see how they worked. He showed us sonograms of night calls from various species of migrating birds that had been previously recorded, and we watched for similar patterns in the active listening setup. However, we seemed to have few migrating birds that evening, and most calls were from spring peepers.

Saturday morning arrived, and most of the field trips left from Lamar at 6:30 a.m. I went on the Mill Hall Wetlands and Salona Area field trip led by Aden Troyer. The first stop was at the Mill Hall Wetlands, which include three large ponds with associated cattail marshes.



The Salona area yielded a nice assortment of species including Ruffed Grouse, Black-billed Cuckoo, Ovenbirds, Black-and-white Warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Photo by Mark McConaughy

A Willow Flycatcher was singing its “fitz-bew” call as we were walking toward the ponds. We were able to see it after walking up to the first pond. A female Hooded Merganser, Wood Ducks, Mallards, and Canada Geese were swimming in the ponds. One Black-crowned Night-Heron flushed from the third pond and flew around the wetlands area. A number of Green Herons were also spotted around the ponds. However, the best bird of the morning was first spotted by one of Aden’s sons – Least Bittern that made three visible short hops over the cattails while we watched. This is the second year in a row I’ve managed to see a Least Bittern during one of the field trips! A Northern Waterthrush serenaded us as we returned to the cars.

After birding the Mill Hall Wetlands, we traveled to the Salona Area, where we walked part of a farm owned by some of Aden Troyer’s friends along the valley between Bald Eagle and Big Mountain. We also walked through a beagle club training area and climbed the side of Big Mountain on this portion of the tour. A good number of Eastern Meadowlarks were singing in the grassy fields along the valley. Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, and a large number of Gray Catbirds were found in the brush rows of the beagle club. The forested slope of Big Mountain produced drumming Ruffed Grouse, one Black-billed Cuckoo, Wood Thrushes, Black-and-white Warblers, Ovenbirds, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Warbling Vireo, House Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds, Brown Thrashers and Red-winged Blackbirds were seen while coming down off Big Mountain back into the farmland. The Mill Hall Wetlands and Salona Area field trip produced a nice range of bird species, and everyone had an enjoyable trip. Folks headed back to Lamar for lunch and then returned to the LHU Sieg Conference Center for the Saturday afternoon paper presentations.

The first paper in the afternoon session was presented by Dr. Margaret Brittingham from Penn State University. She talked about how Marcellus Shale projects were affecting bird populations. Several of her students are conducting research in the northern tier of counties where Marcellus Shale gas wells are being drilled in core forest habitat. Information from the second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas is being used as a baseline to track changes caused by Marcellus Shale well drilling since the work for the Atlas was conducted largely before the gas boom. Gas well platforms and associated feeder gas lines and roads are fragmenting the forests of this region. Preliminary results of these studies have found that bird species that rely on dense, close-cover forests (e.g., Black-throated Green Warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Ovenbirds, etc.) are decreasing in number close to the well pads while edge species (e.g., American Robins,

Song Sparrows, etc.) were increasingly found near the well pads and infrastructure.

Doug Gross from the Pennsylvania Game Commission then presented a paper about Pennsylvania Boreal Conifer Forest Birds. Doug indicated clear-cut logging during the 19th century had pretty much eliminated old growth boreal forests in northern Pennsylvania; however, regrowth of these forest habitats in the upper tier of counties during the 20th century has resulted in some northern-adapted bird species returning to nest in this part of the state. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers have been found nesting in conifer swamps along with Canada Warblers and White-throated Sparrows. Blackpoll Warblers have been found nesting in Coal Bed Swamp. Other northern species now nesting or likely nesting in northern Pennsylvania include Merlin, Swainson’s Thrush, and Red Crossbill. However, these species are not faring well due to increased pressure from development by Marcellus Shale gas drilling. Canada Warbler and Northern Goshawk numbers appear to be declining as the forests become more fragmented. Some of the other species mentioned may also be affected by increased gas well drilling in the future.

A break between Doug Gross’s paper and the next paper was provided so attendees could visit the vendors and make bids on silent auction items. Money from the silent auction funds the PSO’s youth scholarship program. Aden Troyer’s binoculars and spotting scopes, Mike Lanzone’s wildlife photographs, and PSO short- and long-sleeved T-shirts, caps, and patches were available for purchase.

The final paper was presented by Charlie Schwarz from the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy. He described the mission of the conservancy and some of the projects it has carried out over the years. The conservancy obtains conservation easements and/or purchases property to be preserved. Some purchased properties may be turned over to the State of Pennsylvania when the state can pay for them. The conservancy has helped stabilize stream banks, restore riparian buffers along streams, and has obtained easements that ensure farmland will remain farmland for eternity. The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy has protected 10,940 acres in the north central region. Anyone interested in the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy or another local conservancy can visit the conserveland.org website for more information. The afternoon session ended at 4:00, and attendees got ready for the Saturday evening social, dinner, and dinner speaker.

The evening session also was held at the LHU Sieg Conference Center. Tabulation of the bird species seen

on Saturday's outings, an annual ritual, was conducted after dinner was finished. The final tabulation of species made after the Sunday outings is presented on page 3 of this newsletter.

Awards were presented to recipients after the tabulation. Bobby Bower was introduced as the Youth Scholarship Recipient for 2012. The 2012 PSO Conservation Award went to the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy for their conservation work in the region. Bonnie Harris from the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy accepted the award. The Earl Poole Award is given to a person who has made significant contributions to Pennsylvania's ornithology. The 2012 Poole Award was given to Dr. Laurie Goodrich from Hawk Mountain Sanctuary for her work with migrating raptors and other studies of Pennsylvania bird species.



Dr. Laurie Goodrich is presented with the Poole Award by incoming president John Fedak.

Photo by Mark McConaughy

Dan Brauning from the Pennsylvania Game Commission was the dinner speaker. Dan is responsible for ensuring that the Second Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas is published, and he informed us that it will be published by the end of 2012. Dan presented examples of breeding bird atlas pages showing how it will be organized. The Second Atlas will have descriptions of individual breeding bird species with a good photograph of each species. There will be color coded maps showing the distribution of breeding birds across the state. Yellow survey blocks will show where the species was seen only during the first breeding bird atlas survey. Green blocks will indicate blocks where the species was seen during both atlas surveys. Blue blocks will signify where the species was seen only during the second atlas. This color coding will allow easy interpretation of the changes that have occurred between the first and second atlases. There also will be a density map for species with sufficient population information for plotting. This map will show where the largest population concentrations of the species are located in the state. There also may be a chart showing how the first and second breeding bird atlas results compare to data from the annual Federal Breeding Bird Survey routes run in Pennsylvania over the same period of time. The presentation made all of us wish we had the second atlas in hand right now! However, it most certainly will be worth obtaining by anyone interested in

the birds of Pennsylvania once it is published. The evening session ended after Dan Brauning's presentation. On Sunday morning I attended the Farrandville and Lick Run Natural Area outing led by Drew Weber. The first stop actually was a reconstructed wetland next to the Mill Hall high school. Here were Mallards and Canada Geese, but the best birds observed there were an Eastern Kingbird and an Orchard Oriole.

We then headed to Farrandville where we walked up an old road along the hillside that formed a steep cliff for the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. A number of singing Wood Thrushes, Black-and-white Warblers, American Redstarts, and Cerulean Warblers were heard and/or seen along the road. One particularly cooperative Cerulean Warbler perched on a branch for a rather extended period of time where it could be seen, heard, and photographed by outing attendees.

Lick Run in State Game Lands 89 was the next stop. We walked along Lick Run and saw and heard calling one Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Canada Warblers, Ovenbirds, Louisiana Waterthrushes and a Black-throated Green Warbler. However, the best bird of the day was a Mourning Warbler that would not cooperate and come from the brush where it was singing so we could actually see it.

We then followed Hazard Road deeper into State Game Lands 89. Several Chestnut-sided Warblers were seen and heard calling off Hazard Road. While returning down Hazard Road, we stopped to view and photograph some endangered Pink Lady Slippers that were growing along the road. It had proved to be a very successful morning.

The annual PSO meeting is a load of fun. You do not have to be a professional or even a hard-core birder to enjoy the meeting. Beginning birders are welcome and enjoy seeing life birds, learning bird calls, and attending outings led by advanced birders. Next year the PSO meeting will be held between Friday, May 31, and Sunday, June 2, 2013 – so keep these dates open! The meeting location has not been finalized, but it will be in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area.

Gene Wilhelm Receives Great Egret Award

On May 14, the National Audubon Society and Bartramian Audubon Society recognized Dr. Gene Wilhelm, presenting him with the Great Egret Award. This award is given to individuals who have made significant long-term contributions to Audubon and conservation in pursuit of the Audubon mission.

The award states:

Rarely will you meet a person more dedicated to preserving life on this planet than Gene Wilhelm. He began his lifelong affiliation with Audubon as a boy, helping stuff envelopes for the St. Louis Audubon Society. Years later, he would be chosen as Vice President of Education at our national headquarters in New York City. Along the way, his career as an environmental educator took him to Pennsylvania, where he became a member of and volunteer for the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. While teaching at Slippery Rock University, Gene was very active with Audubon, offering quality educational programs throughout the area. While with Audubon in New York City, he helped former students in Western Pennsylvania inaugurate the Bartramian Audubon Society chapter. He has served BAS in many capacities from President, to newsletter editor, to his current role as Sanctuary Chair (overseeing two exemplary sanctuary programs that he created). His accomplishments and contributions are immeasurable. He continues to be a strong advocate and dedicated spokesman for the environment at local, state and

national levels. Gene has certainly become one of our valuable resources.

In addition to the certificate, Dr. Wilhelm also received an 8" x 10" photograph of the Great Egret by Bill Stripling.



Bird Quiz

How well do you know your Pennsylvania birds?

1. Which shorebird, a rare visitor to Pennsylvania, has four adult male plumage morphs including one that looks exactly like a female?
2. Which member of the Phasianidae family was once common in northeastern Pennsylvania but is now extirpated from eastern North America?
3. Of all our wood-warblers, which has the most strongly patterned undertail coverts?
4. Which chickadee species is most closely related genetically to the Black-capped Chickadee?
5. One murre and two murrelets are on the Pennsylvania checklist. Which are they? For a bonus, name the chronological order in which they were documented.

(See Answers on page 16.)

Explore All Resources

by Arlene Koch



There's a lot of variation in the size, shape, and even shade of red on an adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak's breast.

Photo by Steve Gosser

I wrote this article on the 31st of May, a time when lots of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks make daily visits to my feeders. Our property isn't in the woods, but there are hundreds of preserved acres of hillside woods across the road and fields, about 175 yards away, where there are apparently more nesting grosbeaks than I suspected.

It's not uncommon, especially in the morning and late in the day, to see three or four adult males at one feeder and just as many elsewhere in the yard. Nor is it uncommon to see just as many adult females at various times during the day. At this time of the year only occasionally do I see both adult males and adult females eating black oil sunflower seeds at the same time, although it does happen.

But judging from what I've seen here during the nesting season through the years, it seems obvious to me that when the males are at my feeders, their female counterparts are either on the nest or with the young, waiting for the other adult to return to switch places. They take turns both on the nest and bringing in beakfuls of insects to feed the young as they grow. The male at times even sings while sitting on the nest, and he has also been known to occasionally sing during the night.

Later in the summer, after the young have turned into fledglings, their plaintive begging calls will pepper the yard. When I first heard this song more years ago than I can remember, I didn't know what it was until I finally found an adult male feeding a young bird. Now it's a sound I've come to look forward to hearing each year even though it means that August and the grosbeaks' departures aren't far away.

Another thing I've learned by looking closely at each individual bird when I have the time is that there's a lot of variation in the size, shape, and even shade of red on an adult male's breast, making it easy to differentiate different birds. It also made me realize just how many more grosbeaks are around than what I thought when I first began seriously looking at them rather than just noting their presence.

Currently there are two really distinct adult males coming to my feeders: one has an orange, not red, breast, and the other has a completely red throat, things I wouldn't have noticed had I not taken the time to actually "look" at them. Also, there are strong variations in the plumages of the females. Some have a lot of breast streaking while some have almost none; some are real buffy on their underparts where others are almost all off-white.



Note how the different pattern of the red on this individual.

Photo by Margaret Higbee



This male has less red, and the coloring is rosier.

Photo by Tom Fetterman

I well remember when I first learned many of these things years ago by consulting books like “The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds” and the Smithsonian Institution’s Bent Series on the life histories of birds. And while some of these publications go back to the early 90s and bird names and classifications have

drastically changed, their behavior is pretty much the same. And this leads me to why I’m saying all this. The new technology is great – the I-Phones, all the apps, eBird, the list serves, and computer downloads of just about everything – but books, magazines, and plain old-fashioned observations are all still just as valuable.

Family Bird-Chasing Rules

by John Fedak

It isn't often that you can talk your whole family into chasing a rarity, but when that bird is a Snowy Owl, one you promise will be close to see, it does get easier. That was what happened on Friday, March 16. We had to go to Pittsburgh anyway.

Rule #1: It is always easier to chase birds with the family if you are on your way to somewhere else.

As we were leaving, I casually mentioned that a friend had seen a Snowy Owl near where we were headed.

Rule #2: Don't make it seem like it is something you really want to see.

When we were close to the area, and Lisa asked how much further, I said only a few more miles...

Rule #3: Never say exactly how far...a number makes the distance seem longer!

When you see the bird – in this case, a large Snowy Owl that we drove under as it sat on a telephone pole because we didn't see it right away - ALWAYS say, "Wasn't that fun?"

Rule #4: Never let them see you worry that you are not going to see the bird!

Now go out there and chase some birds with the family!



We drove under the Snowy Owl as it sat on a telephone pole because we didn't see it right away.

Special Thanks to Our Outgoing Board Members

Thanks to our two outgoing board members, Rob Blye and Deuane Hoffman for their service to the PSO Board of Directors.

Rob served a total of 9 consecutive years since 2003 while Deuane, served a total of 12. Deuane was on the board

from 1999 to 2002 then was reelected and served from 2003 through 2012.

We appreciate your willingness to serve and all you have contributed to PSO.

A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.

– Lou Holtz

Welcome, New Board Members!

At our business meeting on May 18, we elected six new board members, Mike Lanzone from Somerset, who will serve as VP, Wayne Laubscher from Lock Haven who headed up the field trips for the 2012 meeting, Cory DeStein from Pittsburgh, Marjorie Howard from Waynesburg, Flo McGuire from Tionesta, and Emily Thomas from Warren. Welcome aboard!

Mike Lanzone



Mike started birding when he was 8, and since then has traveled the world to watch, listen, study, and photograph birds. In his professional career he has worked as a field ornithologist for various state, federal, and private organizations across the United States and Mexico. Recently he was the Assistant Coordinator for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas and the Biotechnology and Biomonitoring Lab Supervisor stationed at Powdermill, the biological research station of Carnegie Museum of Natural History. In the spring of 2011 he was awarded the Conservation Award from the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology for the work done on eastern Golden Eagles. Currently, Mike is the Chief Executive Officer of Cellular Tracking Technologies in Somerset, PA. He is still actively involved in research, his major foci include Golden Eagle flight behavior and telemetry and nocturnal monitoring of birds using flight calls. A lot of his work recently has focused on advances in the application of bioacoustics to the monitoring of geographically remote breeding populations of songbirds in North America and, hopefully, around the world.

Mike's other hobbies include leps and odes, photography, wine making, and gardening.

Included in this newsletter are short biographies for the first two. The next two newsletters will include biographies for the others.

We appreciate their willingness to bring their individual talents to PSO. Welcome aboard!!!

Wayne Laubscher

Wayne is a bander of hummingbirds and also Northern Saw-whet Owls at his farm as part of Project Owl-net, a volunteer project. Currently, he is working for the PA Game Commission as a biological aide doing Northern Goshawk and Golden-winged Warbler surveys.



For several years he worked for the Clinton County Emergency Services Dept. as the West Nile Virus and Mosquito Control Coordinator for Clinton County. Also recently, he did contract wildlife surveys on Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) lands for the PA Game Commission and Penn State University. He also assists on a volunteer basis for the PA Game Commission with its Barn Owl Project and endangered Peregrine Falcons which nest in Clinton and Lycoming Counties.

Wayne is the Clinton County compiler for the *PA Birds* publication and a board member of the Lycoming Audubon Society as well as the Northcentral PA Conservancy Technical Committee. He also coordinates the Audubon CBC centered in the Lock Haven area. He is a native of the Lock Haven region, residing in Swissdale.

Wayne is also quite an accomplished bird photographer. See page 15 for two of his many excellent photos.



The Raven Reporter

Tales of
Discovery about
Pennsylvania
Birds



Bald Eagle and Osprey Nesting Seasons

Our Pennsylvania Bald Eagle nesting population continues to grow well past 200 active nests. More than 30 new nests have been found in the 2012 season, but it is not over yet. New nests now unreported may be easier to find now with young sitting on the branches of the nest tree. At this time of year, we also seek information on the results of nests. With so many nests, many well-hidden after leaf-out, it is quite a challenge to determine the results of nests each year. We also would like to determine the reason for nest failures if known. Volunteers can really help out by reporting those results of nests they observe.

Although we do not check Osprey nests annually, we are interested in learning of new Osprey nests. Please also report any new nests to the PGC. More information about our Bald Eagle and Osprey programs can be found on the Wildlife pages of the PGC website. This includes Bald Eagle watch sites and forms to fill out for reporting results.

If you have news of a Bald Eagle or Osprey nest, please contact our Endangered Bird biologist, Patti Barber at patbarber@pa.gov.

Heron Colony Survey Nearly Completed

(Don Detwiler and Doug Gross)

The PA Game Commission is conducting a full statewide survey of its heron colonies in 2012. Thanks to all of you who have helped by sending in your reports. Several birders have been very helpful with heron colony surveys. By June, this survey is nearly completed, but there always are some new colonies or outliers that are worth pursuing. New Great Blue Heron colonies seem to be cropping up each year. If you know of any new colonies, please let our heron colony coordinator, Don Detwiler, know about them. Read the [Heron Colony Observation Protocols](#) to ensure you're approaching this fieldwork in a way that

will help science and not disrupt nesting herons. Please send your completed survey forms to:

herondata@gmail.com.

We also seek information about our limited number of Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great Egrets, and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons – all Pennsylvania Endangered species. When some colonies are disrupted, birds may move to another location and attempt to nest. So, new nests are sometimes found even in June. A few new night-heron nests were found this season in an urban area of southeastern Pennsylvania. Once we talked to (the human) neighbors, we found out that the night-herons had nested there in past years. We wonder if there are other unreported colonies out there, too. This can happen in the “urban jungle” as easily as the “wilderness” of the state. Check out the pages on the PGC website for the heron survey in the [Endangered and Threatened Species Section](#). There also is a handy data sheet to fill out and send in.

eBird Now Shows IBA Data

(eBird Team and Doug Gross)

We are excited to report that Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for the USA and Canada are now visible for eBird output. This is an enhancement that we have long awaited and was made possible through the integrated IBA layers for the USA and Canada that have recently been shared with Cornell and the eBird team. For several years it has been possible to view IBA output for selected states via their state-specific portals (Virginia, Massachusetts, California, and others) and for Canada (via Canada eBird only), but the information is accessible from anywhere in eBird. And for many states' IBAs, including Pennsylvania, this is the first time this information has ever been summarized anywhere!

Pennsylvania's IBA project is coordinated by Audubon Pennsylvania. Many IBAs are sponsored by local Audubon chapters or bird clubs. Hundreds of birders in our state have contributed to the IBA bird information by logging into eBird and submitting their field trip data. The Game Commission enthusiastically urges birders to log their data into eBird to better monitor IBAs. Each IBA has been selected for different reasons, so the most critical data for some could be the breeding season while for others, it might be migration seasons. Even data for fairly common species can be important to help understand the importance of a particular IBA for that species' conservation.

These data outputs are using the IBA polygon in GIS to draw on all data submitted from within the polygon – this differs from eBird hotspot summaries on those same pages, which draw on data from a single point that is

shared among users. This means that these polygon-based queries are much more comprehensive and solve the problem of having a birder visit the Kittatinny Ridge or Allegheny Front (for two examples of large PA IBAs with multiple ownership) and plot their own, personal point for their observation that never becomes part of the data output for the official eBird hotspot.

The types of output are all accessible from eBird's "View and Explore Data" page:

<http://ebird.org/ebird/eBirdReports?cmd=Start>. The main types of output are:

1. Bar chart – Year-round summary of species' frequency. Great for seeing patterns of occurrence within the year (i.e., migration)
2. Line graphs – Clicking on any species' name from the bar chart takes you to a page with other occurrence data: frequency, high count, abundance, birds/hour, totals, average count.
3. Maps – Clicking on the map link from bar chart or line graphs takes you to a point map for the species zoomed in on the IBA; IBA boundaries are *not* shown.
4. High counts – Shows highest reported count from inside the IBA.
5. Arrival/Departure date – Shows earliest/latest report in the year for a species.
6. All-time First/Last – Shows first ever (i.e., the report from the longest ago) for any species in the area.

We encourage you explore this output and to promote it in your bird organizations, list serves, and elsewhere. Just copy the link into text, and it links someone directly to those outputs. We really hope these data outputs will be useful for IBA assessments and for ongoing monitoring, which ideally will be done via eBird so that the data are instantly incorporated in these summaries.

We also encourage you to adopt an IBA for birding this summer. Pick one that is "way out there" and not visited by many birders. eBird data grows every day, but there are many data gaps because many of the great bird locations are not where there are many people. Please encourage your fellow birders to collect data to fill the gaps or enter old data that will help fill the gaps. It all helps the birds!

Focus on the Wood Thrush

(by Kathy Korber and Doug Gross)

The springtime forests of Pennsylvania are not complete until the flutelike song of the Wood Thrush echoes through the hardwoods and mixed woodlands. By mid April Wood Thrush trickle through the state gradually rising until their numbers peak toward late May. The incomparable "ee-o-lay" song of this large thrush

resonates through the deep woods like a soloist among a spring chorus of birdsong. Its uniquely structured syrinx, or vocal organ, allows the Wood Thrush to produce multiple notes simultaneously, creating its richly harmonized flutelike song. Fast trilling end notes trail the melodious song, and the Wood Thrush also produces a rapid "pip-pip-pip-pip" call. The range of the Wood Thrush covers all of Pennsylvania, and its song may be heard throughout the forests and woodlands across the state during spring and summer. The state is particularly important to Wood Thrush conservation with approximately 8.5% of the nesting population in Pennsylvania. *Therefore, we have stewardship responsibility for this declining species, and data submitted to various projects can be valuable.*

This summer resident, a neotropical migratory bird, inhabits moist deciduous forests of Pennsylvania and eastern North America from southeastern Canada to the Florida Panhandle but winters far to the south in the lowland tropical forests of Mexico and Central America. The Wood Thrush is the most widespread of all our eastern forest neotropical migrants. Pennsylvania plays a critical role in the conservation of the Wood Thrush as it supports a significant portion of the entire nesting population of the species.

The Wood Thrush is a forest interior species with a preference for large, undisturbed forest tracts. These expansive forest types, with a dense interior canopy and thick understory, provide the Wood Thrush with a prolific food supply in the form of thriving insect populations, a necessity on breeding grounds, wintering grounds and stopover sites along migration routes. Where available, the Wood Thrush also consumes fruit, especially in late summer and winter.

This plump, brown thrush forages for protein-rich insects and other invertebrates found on and near the ground and in the lower canopy. It searches through leaf litter, picking and probing dead leaves for prey including millipedes, ants, grubs, pill bugs, caterpillars and spiders. It also gleans insects and fruit from plants and shrubs above the ground. Fruits like wild berries are especially important to the Wood Thrush just before and during spring and fall migrations because fruit helps build vital energy reserves necessary for such exerting flights and stopovers.

In addition to adequate food resources, large contiguous tracts of forest provide the Wood Thrush with the greatest protection for nesting success. In this deep forest habitat, Wood Thrushes and their eggs, nestlings and fledglings are far less vulnerable to predators like crows, Blue Jays, domestic cats, Common Grackles, chipmunks, raccoons, opossums, and various snakes. Wood Thrushes usually nest within ten feet of the ground, a disadvantage in edge

habitats where numerous aerial, arboreal, and terrestrial predators routinely prowl and forage. Many of the woodland predators avoid interior blocks of forest and concentrate on the more accessible outer margins where hunting is favorable. The Wood Thrush will nest in a variety of wooded habitats including small forest tracts and woodlands with streams and thick understory, woodlots, park fringes, and the wooded edges of developments; however, nesting success may decrease in these fragmented habitats and marginal environments. In a forest interior habitat the Wood Thrush has not only greater protection from predators but protection, too, from the unconventional nesting behavior of the Brown-headed Cowbird, a brood parasite which thrives in various Pennsylvania habitats year round. The Brown-headed Cowbird has adapted to inhabiting agricultural areas, woodland edges, residential areas, roadsides, and fragmented forests such as those created by access roads, utility corridors, and pipelines.

As with many forest songbirds, Wood Thrush populations have plunged with an estimated loss of 1.8 percent per year in North America. Data from Breeding Bird Surveys indicate a long-term decline of near 50 percent of the total population as compared to the mid 1960s. In Pennsylvania, Wood Thrush populations have dropped at least 25 percent according to numbers collected during the 1980s for the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas. Scientists believe that Wood Thrush populations are dwindling because of multiple environmental factors but driving the decline is habitat loss forest destruction and fragmentation on both the breeding grounds and wintering grounds. Although Wood Thrushes are often attracted to forest edges and small woodlots, they tend not to be as successful nesting in such situations. Low nest placement and exposure to various nest predators does not allow much nesting success. There are many nest predators in the fragmented forest that raid nests, especially those low to the ground.

In eastern North America influences such as urban development, a rising demand for energy resources and invasive plants and animals continue to alter forest habitat. In Pennsylvania alone an estimated 350 acres of open space and wildlife habitat is lost each day to urban sprawl and development. Pennsylvania's forest acreage of roughly 16.5 million acres or 58 percent of the total land area sounds like a lot of forest but the grand forests, which historically covered at least 95 percent of the state, have been drastically reduced and whittled into small tracts and fragments in most regions of the state. Energy development further threatens the forest habitat of Wood Thrush in Pennsylvania and throughout the Appalachian Mountains. Atmospheric acid deposition also threatens Wood Thrush productivity by limiting the availability of calcium-rich invertebrates, particularly snails. Wood Thrushes also can be common in lowland forests where

suburban sprawl is eliminating or fragmenting this habitat. Windows are a constant threat to birds in the suburban landscape. Resource and land-use pressures exist throughout the Wood Thrush's breeding range in North America, even in the mountains.

Similar deforestation is taking place in other eastern states and to a greater extent with modern coal mining practices. In the Appalachian Mountains, entire ridge tops are being removed for coal extraction. The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates 2,200 square miles of Appalachian Forest has been destroyed by mountaintop removal mining in the past two decades with profound environmental impacts on forest birds and other wildlife.

The Tropical Connection

In winter, the Wood Thrush relies on tropical forests found in southern Mexico and most of Central America including Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama. This seasonal resident inhabits mixed palm forest, broad-leaved, and semi-evergreen forests. It prefers lowland forest but can be found at higher elevations in core wintering areas. The winter range of the Wood Thrush covers an area of approximately 185,000 square miles which is considerably smaller than the roughly 1.3 million square miles of its breeding range in North America. This smaller winter range must sustain the total Wood Thrush population through the winter months. Therefore, it is critical that Middle American forests are conserved. Resident neotropical species often occupy the same habitat as Wood Thrush and are a priority for conservation organizations of that region. This creates opportunities for partnerships between wildlife conservation organizations and agencies in North America and Middle America. The Game Commission is pleased to partner with other organizations to protect Wood Thrush habitat in the Neotropics through the Southern Wings program and other partnerships. Here are some interesting links about Wood Thrush:

Land Manager's Guide to Improving Habitat for Forest Thrushes by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology:
www.birds.cornell.edu/conservation/thrush/thrushguide.pdf

Wood Thrush Declines Linked to Acid Rain:
http://www.birds.cornell.edu/Publications/Birdscope/Autumn2002/wood_thrush.html

Wood Thrush Conservation Initiative:
<http://birds.audubon.org/woodthrush-conservation>

(continued on page 16)

Ornithological Literature Notes

Pennsylvania birders relish the thrill of watching Golden Eagles gliding along the updrafts of our mountain ridges. If you studied Laurie Goodrich's autumn raptor migration summary for 2011 in *Pennsylvania Birds*, you know that 1,170 Golden Eagles were counted from July/August to December/January. This gratifying number included 61 at the Allegheny Front on 11/1, the state's second highest one-day count ever.

It may be surprising to realize how little is understood about the ecology, demography, and even the population size of these magnificent birds. A recently formed collaboration named the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group is hoping to close many gaps of knowledge that could be critical to the population's future. In an extensive commentary published in 2012 (*Auk* 129:168–176), Todd Katzner and 25 coauthors from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Maine, Minnesota, Quebec, and Newfoundland describe the current state of knowledge and what remains to be learned.

Most of the eagles breed at the tundra/boreal forest/wetland ecotone in Quebec, with presumably small numbers in Labrador and Ontario. Formerly the species nested in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and perhaps Vermont. Breeding has never been confirmed in Pennsylvania.

There are three autumn migration routes. The main passage is from Quebec and Labrador through New York and down the Appalachian ridges through Pennsylvania, western Maryland, and eastern West Virginia. Small numbers travel from the Gaspé Peninsula and through New England. A third segment of the population travels southwestward through the Great Lakes region.

In winter, a few remain as far north as New England, but most winter in forested areas of the high Appalachians of West Virginia and western Kentucky. Others are regularly sighted in Tennessee, Virginia, Delaware, North and South Carolina, and Georgia. The authors say that the density, habitat use, and overall distribution "are poorly understood and of high priority for future study."

Data compiled by the authors indicate that populations in eastern Canada are likely "stable" at the moment. However, there are threats. The most publicized danger in the Appalachians is the increasing number of wind turbines being built along ridges where winds also happen to create the eagles' preferred migration paths. Other dangers include captures in leg-hold traps set for mammals, lead poisoning from lead shot in carcasses of game shot by hunters, chemical poisoning, collisions with towers, turbines, and other tall structures, as well as habitat losses due especially to forest fragmentation for energy development.

The authors recommend focusing management efforts primarily on threats from collisions, lead poisoning, trapping, and habitat fragmentation—but they emphasize that little can be achieved without legal and regulatory protection for the eagles by government agencies. Most state wildlife action plans (SWAPs) deal with breeding birds, not migrants and winterers. Katzner and his colleagues offer a warning: "Unless Golden Eagles are designated as a Species in Greatest Need of Conservation in a SWAP, proactive conservation measures for them are rarely possible." Only five of 23 SWAPs in the east recognize the Golden Eagle as a species of conservation concern.

We can take pride that Pennsylvania, ranking it as Vulnerable, is one of the five. Our state's researchers have had an important part in calling attention to the need for conservation action. In fact, Katzner and three other authors of the commentary in the *Auk*, Mike Lanzone, Trish Miller, and David Brandes, received the PSO's Conservation Award in 2011 for their cutting-edge work in monitoring the migration routes along the Appalachian ridges. Their work may help to assure that Golden Eagles continue to glide thrillingly along our mountaintops far into the future.

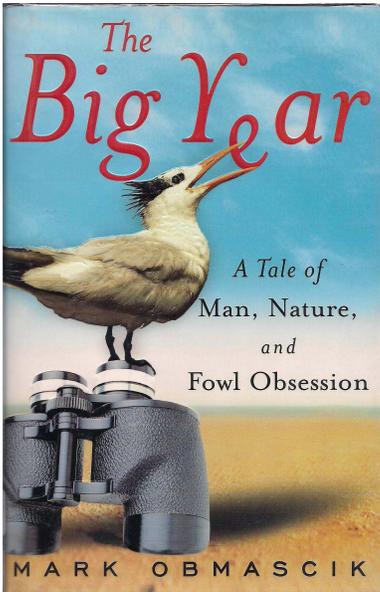
– Paul Hess
Natrona Heights, PA
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Did You Know That???

- ☼ Woodcocks are able to move just the tip of the upper mandible. This capability enables the bird to grab hold of an earthworm deep in the ground without having to expend the energy to push the soil aside by opening its entire bill.
- ☼ The Red-throated Loon is the only loon able to stand upright.

Book Review

The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature and Fowl Obsession by Mark Obmascik. Free Press. 250 pages.



OK, folks, you may have seen the movie; but if you have not read the book, I recommend you find a copy and read it. Penned by passionate birder Mark Obmascik, the lead environmental writer for the 2000 Pulitzer Prize winning *Denver Post*, the book leads you through the adventures of three different men during the year of 1998 as they compete for the North American total species

record during their "Big Year." Mark not only details these men's travels ranging from Cape May, NJ, to a landfill in Brownsville, TX, to the isolated island of Attu at the end of the Aleutian Island chain off Alaska, but he goes into detail about their lives and different personalities. Two of the characters, Sandy Komito, a roofing, flooring, and waterproofing contractor from New Jersey, and Al Levantin, a chemist and successful businessman out of Colorado, were retired and wealthy enough to support a "Big Year." But the third character, Greg Miller, a software engineer originally from a

Mennonite family in Ohio, worked full time at a nuclear power plant in Maryland and birded at the same time. Miller went into heavy debt to fund his "Big Year."

The book is about 250 pages long and is easy to read. You should have no problem completing the book in one weekend – unless like me, you fall asleep after about 10 pages. Mark's writing style is easy to follow and whimsical. Because he is an avid birder, he can identify with his characters.

I have been actively birding for about 2½ years, and I was delighted with Mark's description of stampeding birders during a fallout in Texas. I compared that description with an experience during the first major trip of my birding life in Bentsen- Rio Grande State Park in Texas. My daughter, son-in-law, and I were birding along a road in the park when a young man with long flowing hair on a bike was broadcasting loudly that the rare Bare-throated Tiger-Heron was being seen off a dike near the park entrance. We had to hurriedly move off the road to make room for the herd of people, mostly gray-headed older folk, to stamp by.

Now I am not going to tell you which of the three characters won the "Big Year," but that character did set a record count of 745 different species. You will have to read the book.

– Tom Glover
Punxsutawney, PA
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Field trip participants were thrilled with the excellent views of this gorgeous Golden-winged Warbler.

Photo by Wayne Laubscher



Peregrine Falcons were one of the PSO meeting highlights this year.

Photo by Wayne Laubscher

Raven Reporter (continued from page)

Wood Thrush Research by the Stutchbury Lab:
<http://www.yorku.ca/bstutch/research.htm>

El Jaguar Reserva, Nicaragua:
<http://www.jaguarreserve.org/>

Good Birding!
Doug

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Answers to Bird Quiz (page 7)

1. Ruff
2. Greater Prairie-Chicken
3. Black-and-white Warbler
4. Mountain Chickadee
5. Thick-billed Murre (1893), Ancient Murrelet (1992),
Long-billed Murrelet (2007)

PSO Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year by the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. To renew your membership, either renew on line at pabirds.org or send your check made payable to "PSO" to:

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